

stay where they were and make the best of it. Their position was only two hundred yards from the enemy, immediately below Petersburg. It was a hell, with heavy cannonading heard all the time . . . and the continuous cold. The night of December 11 "was the coldest night we have had this winter." Fortunately, Colonel Tate had recently returned to lead the regiment once more. The men of Company K were still looking for their commander, Captain Vincent, who was due at any time. John K. Walker could write his brother Bill on December 12 as he stood on picket duty in the cold below Petersburg:

Billie I understand that you are coming out on a visit, but I will advise you to stay at home as long as you can because we have got no winters Quarters provided yet at all, and I want you to bring me some things from home but if you have to come in less time than two weeks, you need not start with any Box. because I will not be allowed the privilege to enjoy it and you need not start with it but I want you to bring me my black mixed round about coat and the yellow silk handkerchief and my gloves and my shoes if you have got them made and if you have not got them made it dont matter. I have got a pr. now, and bring my old leggings also, and tell Mother to dye my overcoat black and send it to me, and send me that little tobacco pouch that I sent home [the] leather one. . . (12)

Walker didn't need a blanket, he had two already; but he wanted a tent fly. He didn't want Bill to bring a box since they couldn't enjoy it unless they were permanently settled in winter quarters. Even as he wrote he could see one of the enemy "very easy" from where he stood. The pickets didn't fire at each other, but only stood and looked, possibly because of some private agreement along that part of the line to hold their fire. In the distance the dull thud of heavy artillery could be heard on the other side of Petersburg. Heavy firing was also heard to the west, on the right of the regimental line. In spite of the nearness of war and the feeling that instant death was just around the corner, the men in Company K were well, including Walker, who had now completely recovered from his November illness. (13)

By mid-December a site had been selected for permanent winter quarters. The location was on the Boydton Plant Road, half a mile below Burgess' Mills and near Dinwiddie Court House. The camp was five miles south of Sullivan's Depot on the important Southside Railroad, one of Lee's major supply lines, which ran from Petersburg to Lynchburg. The men were busy cutting down trees and trimming logs to make their huts. John K. Walker wrote, "I am going to fix me up a bully House." Brigadier General Lewis explained,